

Story 1670 (1994 Tape 1

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22

Location: İzmir, İzmir
Province

Date: May 1994

Nasreddin Hoca's¹ Transformed Donkey

One day Nasreddin Hoca decided to buy a new and younger donkey. The donkey he had been using had grown quite old. When he arrived at the marketplace, the Hoca looked around for a while. Finally he found a donkey that seemed to be just what he needed, and so he began bargaining with the seller. The Hoca did not know, however, that the seller was a member of a gang of thieves. After they had reached an agreement on the price, Nasreddin Hoca bought the donkey. He took it home and tied it in his barn. Then he went upstairs in his house and went to bed.

Later in the night two members of the gang went to Nasreddin Hoca's barn to steal back the donkey while the Hoca was asleep. However, as they entered the barn, one of the thieves accidentally kicked a bucket, and the noise awakened the Hoca. One of the thieves grabbed the donkey and ran away with it, but the other one was too slow to escape. Desperate to save himself in some way, this

¹Nasreddin Hoca is the most popular comic folk figure in the Turkish oral tradition. Tales about him are legion.

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second thief tied himself in the place where the donkey had been and waited for the arrival of Nasreddin Hoca

The Hoca was confused when he found a man standing where he had tied a donkey. (Of course, he did not know that the man was a thief. He asked the man, "Who are you?"

The thief answered, "I am your donkey."

That is impossible!" said the Hoca.

Trying hard to persuade Nasreddin Hoca to believe his account, the thief continued, "I was a human being once, but I made the mistake of swearing at my father. As punishment for this act, I was turned into a donkey by a jinn."² Then the thief begged Nasreddin Hoca to forgive him and set him free.

Believing the thief's explanation, Nasreddin Hoca untied him and decided to let him go. Before he released the man, however, Nasreddin Hoca warned him, "Never say such things again to your father! Go kiss his hands and apologize to him!"

²The word jinn suggests two very different kinds of supernatural creatures. The first is the huge supernatural being who comes forth from a bottle or appears in response to some signal, such as the rubbing of a magic lamp or ring. This creature then proceeds to give the caller supernatural or magic aid to achieve what he wishes. The other kind of jinn is never seen. It is a spiritual force referred to in some Sufi belief and in other mystical systems.

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On the following day Nasreddin Hoca returned to the marketplace to buy another donkey. He was surprised to see for sale there the same donkey he had bought the day before. He was also annoyed. Going over to the donkey, he whispered into its ear, "You bad boy! You swore at your father again--didn't you?"